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## THE TRANSPORTATION OF IMMIGRANTS AND RECEPTION ARRANGEMENTS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

As long as European emigration was small the transportation of passengers of the lower class was an incidental part of the business of merchant vessels. It was profitable, but there was too little of it, and it was too uncertain to justify the special equipment and provisioning of ships in such a way as to secure comfort and health on a long voyage. All merchant vessels would take passengers if they were able to pay, but none were constructed and fitted up primarily for that purpose. In choosing a route, therefore, the intending emigrant selected a port of departure mainly with reference to its accessibility from his home, though he was obliged to consider to some extent the likelihood of his finding there without long delay some ship clearing for America. As emigration increased, however, there was a growing tendency for it to be concentrated at certain points. This was because later emigrants learned from the experience of those who had preceded them that some ports offered greater facilities than others, and because the merchant houses and ship-owners of some cities were more active in seeking the business of passenger transportation than were those of other places.

In the eighteenth century the Palatines and other South Germans had for a long time been accustomed to sail from Rotterdam or some other port of the Netherlands, sometimes by way of England, sometimes direct to America. This was because those ports were more accessible to them by way of the Rhine than any other. But Dutch merchants and ship owners had found little profit in them; for most of them were poor, many of them had to be supported from the time of their arrival till they embarked, and as the trade of the Low Countries with America was not large, opportunities for taking ship were infrequent. Very naturally the Dutch did not try to extend a traffic that brought them more trouble than pecuniary advantage; on the contrary, they discouraged it,

and they did so with such success that after emigration began on a larger scale in the nineteenth century, they failed to get a large share of the business that grew out of it.<sup>1</sup>

After the fall of Napoleon, Havre became the chief port of departure for continental Europe, and it retained its supremacy for more than a generation. The Swiss<sup>2</sup> and South Germans<sup>3</sup> arrived there overland or by sail from Cologne; and many came in coasting vessels from North Germany,<sup>4</sup> and even from Norway<sup>5</sup> for transshipment to America. In 1854 the German emigration by way of Havre exceeded that from Bremen by twenty thousand; while Bremen was ahead of Hamburg by twenty-five thousand, and Hamburg in turn led Antwerp by a like number.<sup>6</sup> The completion of the German railway system and the great expansion of steam navigation in the Hanseatic cities eventually deprived Havre of her predominance in the business, but she remained an important port of departure as long as there was a large emigration from the region to which she was an accessible outlet.

As early as 1819 Westphalians and Saxons began to go by way of Bremen and Hamburg;<sup>7</sup> but it was not till 1832, when emigration first started on a large scale from North Germany,<sup>8</sup> that passenger transportation became an important branch of the business of those cities. In the competition that then arose between them Bremen took and kept the lead. She devised cheaper, quicker, and more comfortable methods of handling and embarking the crowds that arrived there, and for nearly a generation she had more intelligent and humane regulations of the shipping engaged in the business than any other port.<sup>9</sup> Until after the middle of the century a third of the passengers leaving Hamburg did not come direct to America, but preferred to make the Atlantic passage on English ships from Hull and Grimby.<sup>10</sup> It was easier to reach

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, C, 130.

<sup>2</sup> Chandéze, *De l'intervention des pouvoirs publics dans l'émigration*, etc., 201.

<sup>3</sup> Grund, *Handbuch und Wegweiser für Auswanderer nach den Vereinigten Staaten*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, C, 131.

<sup>5</sup> *Niles' Register*, LXIV, 312.

<sup>6</sup> Büchele, *Land und Volk der Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika*, 277.

<sup>7</sup> Lehmann, *Die Deutsche Auswanderung*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Brauns, *Amerika und die moderne Völkerwanderung*, 288.

<sup>9</sup> Grund, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>10</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 277.

England from Hamburg than from Bremen, and as English ships were subject to far less severe restrictions than those of the German ports, they could afford to transport emigrants at a much lower price. Until the late forties many Germans went by way of Liverpool, but in subsequent years they were deterred from selecting that route by the crowds of "unclean, thievish" Irish who embarked there, and who heartily reciprocated their strong antipathy.<sup>11</sup> By the middle of the century Bremen and Hamburg were regarded as the best ports of departure for the reason that passengers on their ships received cooked food on the voyage. Both cities profited greatly from the transportation of emigrants. In 1850 the vessels owned by their merchants numbered 605, and in 1857 they had increased to 771.<sup>12</sup> But for emigration such a growth would have been impossible, since ships that brought bulky cargoes of raw materials from America would have been obliged to make the westward voyage for the most part in ballast.

For England, Liverpool and Hull remained in the nineteenth century, as they had been in the eighteenth, the most important ports of departure. In Ireland there was hardly a coast town from which westbound vessels did not carry emigrants; but they were mostly bound for Canada, whence they hoped to cross the border; for there was little trade between Ireland and the United States, and few vessels left there direct for our ports.<sup>13</sup> Most of the Irish coming to this country gathered at Cork, whence they were taken to Liverpool and transferred to English or American vessels.<sup>14</sup>

After the recovery of this country from the industrial depression of 1819-20, passenger transportation became an important branch of commerce. The great majority of the emigrants from Europe were carried by British, German, and American vessels and the business was managed by the agents of commercial houses in the North Sea ports, Liverpool, London, and New York. Neither Dutch<sup>15</sup> nor French shipping<sup>16</sup> took much part in it. Until steam substituted sails, the ships of Bremen and Hamburg, owing to governmental regulations, had a higher standard of sanitation and

<sup>11</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 511.

<sup>14</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, C, 129.

<sup>12</sup> Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 93.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, C, 130.

<sup>13</sup> 25th Cong., H.R., No. 1,040, 20.

<sup>16</sup> 43d Cong., Senate Exec. Doc. No. 23, 123.

general accommodations than their competitors, but they likewise had a higher rate of prices. They brought therefore, as a rule, a better class of immigrants than were brought from the continent on any other vessels. Between English and American ships there was little to choose.<sup>17</sup> For safety from purely maritime dangers, as well as for cheapness and swiftness, they were rather preferable to those of Germany.

The development of steam transportation for immigrants, even after the invention of the screw propeller, was not so rapid as might have been expected. It was not till 1865 that more of them came by steam than by sail;<sup>18</sup> and for more than a decade after that date sailing vessels still had a considerable share of the business. In 1855 there were about eighty steamships in regular service between the United States and Europe.<sup>19</sup> New York was connected with Liverpool by two lines. The Cunard Line owned seven ships of from 1,423 to 2,266 tons, and advertised to sail twice a week in favorable seasons of the year. Its competitor, the Collins Line, made a brilliant beginning in 1850 with four ships of about 2,900 tons. It was an American line, and obtained a subsidy to carry the mails. Its ships were the fastest afloat; one of them, the "Baltic," made the passage in 1852 in nine and a half days.<sup>20</sup> The line was popular but not profitable. It lost a ship by collision in 1854, and had hardly replaced it when another went down in 1856. In the same year the subsidy was withdrawn; and its three remaining ships were sold by the sheriff in 1858. There were also at that date lines of two steamers each from New York to Bremen and to Havre; and one steamship between New York and Glasgow. Boston and Liverpool were connected by an English line of two steamers. The cheapest, but by no means the best, steamship connection was by the short-lived line of Richardson & Co., from Liverpool to Philadelphia.<sup>21</sup> Such were the small beginnings of passenger traffic by steam; its later development has been told too often to justify its repetition here.

<sup>17</sup> S. Smith, *The Settler's New Home*, etc., 34.

<sup>18</sup> Kapp, *Immigration to the Port of New York*, 241.

<sup>19</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 400.

<sup>20</sup> Correspondence of *New York Times*, April 15, 1909.

<sup>21</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 400 ff.

Throughout the eighteenth century Philadelphia had been the chief port of arrival for new settlers in America, but after 1816<sup>22</sup> she was outstripped by New York. The selection of a landing-place in America depended in some degree on its commercial connections with the immigrant's port of departure, but in the main on its accessibility to his ultimate destination. So long as settlement was confined to the region east of the Alleghenies, Philadelphia was the most convenient port of entry for agricultural settlers like the Germans and Scotch-Irish; but from the time that the frontier crossed the mountains access to the new lands was most readily found from New York. Her connection with the interior was a prime cause of New York's commercial supremacy, and the two together account for the growing favor shown her by immigrants. In the middle of the century Buffalo, Cleveland, and Milwaukee were the distributing points for those bound to the Northwest, and to reach these cities the Erie Canal and, after 1846, the railroad from New York to Buffalo were by far the quickest and the cheapest routes. For those bound to the Middle West, Wheeling, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis were the distributing points; and for reaching them New York offered facilities as good as those from Philadelphia and better than those from Boston or Baltimore.<sup>23</sup> New Orleans was favorably situated for such as were bound for the Mississippi Valley and she did receive a considerable number of immigrants; but the voyage was two or three weeks longer than to New York,<sup>24</sup> the ships sailing thither from Europe were inferior,<sup>25</sup> the journey up the Mississippi to St. Louis was unpleasant, dangerous, and little shorter than from New York,<sup>26</sup> and above all, the dread of yellow fever and other maladies common among strangers in a southern climate<sup>27</sup> combined to deter most Europeans from choosing that route. Since 1830 New York has been "the gateway of the nation." The relatively small number of immigrants landing elsewhere have been for the most part people actuated by some

<sup>22</sup> *Niles' Register*, XIII, 314, 360.

<sup>23</sup> Straten-Ponthoz, *Forschungen über die Lage der Auswanderung*, 77 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Jörg, *op. cit.*, *Briefe aus der Vereinigten Staaten*, 219.

<sup>25</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 511.

<sup>26</sup> Jörg, 219, 275; Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, 79.

<sup>27</sup> Grund, *op. cit.*, 28.

personal or local motive with a definite plan and purpose, in the accomplishment of which the selection of a landing-place was a matter of importance;<sup>28</sup> while the great stream of those seeking land or labor in America, as well as mere adventurers and men without plans or money, has flowed in increasing volume to New York.

During the nineteenth century no material reduction was made in the length of the voyage till the transition was effected from sail to steam. Much of course depended on the season of the year and weather conditions. Vessels were fortunate when they made the passage from Europe in less than a month; unfortunate, when it took them two months. In 1830 emigrants embarking from England were required to provide themselves with food for six weeks;<sup>29</sup> and this was thought to be sufficient to allow for delays due to any ordinary causes. In 1867 the average length of the voyage by sail for all immigrants was about forty-four days and six hours, and five years later the time had been reduced by little more than an hour.<sup>30</sup> In 1855 the Cunard and Collins lines advertised to make the passage by steam to Liverpool in twelve days; and the steamers from New York to Bremen or Havre crossed in fourteen days.<sup>31</sup> In 1867 the average length of the passage by steam was thirteen days and nearly twenty-two hours; but five years later it had been shortened by more than half a day.<sup>32</sup>

The cost of the voyage fluctuated greatly. Until the middle of the century the German ships were alone in furnishing steerage passengers with the necessities of life; on all other ships they were required to provide themselves with everything except fire and water, so that the price paid to the master of the vessel was not the largest part of the emigrant's expenses. In 1816 the actual charge for transportation from London was £10.<sup>33</sup> Fifteen years later it was little more than half as much from any of the English ports;<sup>34</sup> and although there was some stiffening of rates at the time

<sup>28</sup> Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Collins, *The Emigrant's Guide*, etc., 66.

<sup>30</sup> 43d Cong., Senate Exec. Doc. No. 23, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 401.

<sup>32</sup> 25th Cong., Senate Exec. Doc. No. 23, 46.

<sup>33</sup> *Niles' Register*, X, 340.

<sup>34</sup> Collins, *op. cit.*, 66, 80; 25th Cong., H.R., No. 1,040, 20.

of the great Irish emigration,<sup>35</sup> it continued to fall until the amendment of the British Passenger Act in 1855. In 1850 the average charge from Liverpool was between seventeen and twenty dollars for grown persons, and ten or fifteen dollars for children.<sup>36</sup> The charge for transportation from the continental ports seems to have been subject to more extreme fluctuations than from the ports of Great Britain. Thus in the summer of 1835 passengers from Bremen paid only sixteen dollars, and were provided with good food on the voyage.<sup>37</sup> Ten years later the charge was twenty dollars from Bremen, twenty-three from Hamburg, including food from both ports; and thirteen or fourteen without food from Antwerp, Rotterdam, and Havre.<sup>38</sup> In 1856 it had risen to thirty dollars from the German cities.<sup>39</sup> By 1873 all ships furnished food, but steerage passengers still had to supply their own bedding and eating utensils; and the average price paid for transportation by all immigrants in that year was forty dollars.<sup>40</sup>

The conditions that prevailed on the typical immigrant ship in the first half of the century not only caused great suffering on the voyage but were a serious menace to life. The United States law of 1819 allowed only two passengers for every five tons of space, but these passengers were in addition to the regular cargo, and very often the space allotted to them was altogether inadequate. In 1828 on a ship from Scotland so little room was available that six families lived during the many weeks of the voyage in the life-boat on deck.<sup>41</sup> It was customary for the captain to lease to an emigrant agent the space reserved for passengers, and to assume no responsibility himself for their comfort and well-being. Into this space the agent packed without regard to age, sex, or state of health as many human beings as the law permitted the ship to carry. The food, bedding, and other baggage they brought with them were very often filthy and unfit for a long voyage.<sup>42</sup> The

<sup>35</sup> *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 63.

<sup>36</sup> Mooney, *Nine Years in America*, 44.

<sup>37</sup> 25th Cong., H.R., No. 1,040, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, 56 note; *Niles' Register*, LXVIII, 289.

<sup>39</sup> *Augsburgische Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 14, 1856; Büchele, *op. cit.*, 504.

<sup>40</sup> 43d Cong., Senate Exec. Doc., No. 23, 160, 163.

<sup>41</sup> *Niles' Register*, XXXIV, 392.

<sup>42</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, C, 131.



ventilation was wretched, the facilities for cooking altogether inadequate, cleanliness was impossible, and arrangements for proper treatment of the sick were lamentably insufficient. The passengers were completely at the mercy of the officers and crew, and brutal treatment was the rule rather than the exception.<sup>43</sup> In 1847 a member of the New York Academy of Medicine went aboard the "Ceylon" from Liverpool. He found that many of the passengers had died on the voyage, and a hundred and fifty were still ill with typhus. "We passed through the steerage . . . but the indescribable filth, the emaciated, half-nude figures, many with the eruption disfiguring their faces, crouching in the bunks or strewn over the decks and cumbering the gangways, broken utensils and debris of food spread recklessly about, presented a picture of which neither pen nor pencil can convey a full idea. . . . Some were just rising from their berths for the first time since leaving Liverpool, having been suffered to lie there during the entire voyage wallowing in their own filth."<sup>44</sup> The lower deck of an immigrant vessel was often little better than that of a slave ship. According to Friedrich Kapp, chairman of the New York Board of Emigration Commissioners, a death-rate of 10 per cent was not uncommon, and it sometimes happened that a third of the passengers died before reaching land.<sup>45</sup> In the dreadful years of the Irish famine the mortality at sea was ghastly. It is said that in 1846 out of 98,105 Irish emigrants 20,365 are known to have died;<sup>46</sup> and in the following year the mortality was 17½ per cent of the embarkation.<sup>47</sup> An old-fashioned sailing vessel once visited by typhus, cholera, or smallpox often carried the germs of contagion for years; and the hapless human beings in the crowded steerage, unclean, ill-fed, and weakened by confinement in an atmosphere foul beyond description, were frequently decimated by disease. Brutal treatment and insanitary conditions prevailed on some ships till late in the century. A paper on the "Hygiene of Emigrant Ships" read before the American Public Health Association in 1880 describes the treatment of passengers on a ship of the

<sup>43</sup> Maguire, *The Irish in America*, 183 ff.; Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, 61.

<sup>44</sup> *Congress. Record*, XIII, 3,023.

<sup>45</sup> Kapp, *Immigration to the Port of New York*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>47</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, C, 130 note.

Red Star Line from Antwerp in that year. On the day of sailing only ten minutes were allowed for the four hundred and thirty people in the steerage to get aboard with their baggage, the officers and crew pushing and kicking them to hurry their movement. They found the steerage wet and dirty, and it remained so during the voyage; in consequence, their bedding soon became water soaked, and there was never an opportunity to get it dry. There was no separation of the sexes whatever. Accommodations were so inadequate that some had to sleep on deck, and many of the bunks assigned to others broke down in the first storm. During the whole voyage the most disgraceful immorality prevailed, and officers and crew took part in it. There were only three dim lights in the steerage at night, and in the semi-darkness there was perfect pandemonium. A group of English passengers in their sworn affidavits described the ship as a floating hell. Two gallons of fresh water were furnished in the morning for four hundred and thirty people to wash. One man said on oath that he got water to drink only twice during the voyage. The officers, except when carousing with the women, were surly and brutal. They were Germans; and when the English passengers expostulated they pretended not to understand or jeered at their complaints.<sup>48</sup> In justice to humanity it should be said that the disgraceful conditions prevailing on this ship were very unusual in 1880; thirty years earlier, however, they were by no means uncommon. The English ships had the evil distinction of the highest death-rate, partly because they were under less stringent regulations than others, and partly because they brought more Irish, who were the poorest and most helpless of all immigrants. In 1847 three-fourths of all the patients in the New York quarantine hospital were from English ships.<sup>49</sup> The New York Commissioners of Emigration reported that in 1847 and 1848 the sick passengers averaged thirty in a thousand on British vessels, nine and three-fifths on American, and eight and three-fifths on German.<sup>50</sup> The frightful mortality in the years of the Irish famine brought about the passage of a British Passenger Act which instituted a much needed reform in sailing regulations. As

<sup>48</sup> *Congress. Record*, XIII, 3,017.

<sup>49</sup> *Niles' Register*, LXXII, 337.

<sup>50</sup> Maguire, *The Irish in America*, 183.

soon, therefore, as the pestilence accompanying the famine ended, sanitary conditions began to improve. From 1855 to 1860 the death-rate for all immigrants was only  $\frac{1}{6}$  of 1 per cent.<sup>51</sup> In 1867 the death-rate was 11.67 in the thousand on sailing vessels and 1.03 on steamships. Five years later it had been reduced by more than 50 per cent on both classes of vessels.<sup>52</sup>

Many attempts were made by the sea-faring nations of Europe, as well as by the United States, to remedy by legislation the evils incident to the voyage. England led the way as early as 1803. Her Passenger Act of that year forbade ships to carry more than three persons for five tons of space, counting two children as equal to one adult.<sup>53</sup> Though this was a step in the right direction, it was ridiculously inadequate. Until 1840, when a Land and Emigration Commission was created, its enforcement was left to the customs and harbor officials, and it seems to have been of little if any practical benefit. The horrors attending the Irish emigration during the years of the great famine forced Parliament to adopt more stringent regulations. The Act of 12 and 13 Victoria specified the berth room, general accommodations, stock of provisions, and regulated other observances for health and comfort.<sup>54</sup> In the matter of food, it was enacted that the master of the vessel must issue to each passenger three quarts of water daily; and each week he must supply two and a half pounds of bread or biscuit, a pound of wheat flour, five pounds of oatmeal, two pounds of rice, two ounces of tea, a half-pound of sugar, and a half-pound of molasses. Potatoes might be substituted for rice or oatmeal at the rate of five pounds for one. The issues were to be in advance and not less than twice a week.<sup>55</sup> The quality of the food and medical supplies as well as the character of the crew were officially inspected before the sailing of the vessel. This act was amended in 1852, 1855, and 1863. Without doubt it was the cause of some improvement, but it was poorly enforced and frequently evaded. It was long a common practice for a ship whose provisions and crew

<sup>51</sup> *U.S. Census of 1860*, "Population," xx.

<sup>52</sup> 43d Cong., Senate Exec. Doc., No. 23, 12.

<sup>53</sup> 25th Cong., H.R., No. 1,040, 20.

<sup>54</sup> *Spectator*, May 1, 1849.

<sup>55</sup> Mooney, *Nine Years in America*, 44.

passed the inspection in Liverpool to be followed out to sea by tenders and lighters, which transferred to her inferior men and supplies and took those that had been inspected back to port.<sup>56</sup> Much more efficient was the legislation of the free cities of Bremen and Hamburg. The measures they adopted were dictated by an enlightened appreciation of their own interests. As soon as the stream of emigration began to flow through Bremen, she began to regulate the traffic in transoceanic passengers, so as to encourage the business; and since the administration of the law was in the hands of those that made it, evasion was not easy. As early as 1830, she not only prescribed what was then considered sufficient space and food for steerage passengers, but she also required that the food should be cooked. After 1850 for the accommodation of emigrants passing through she maintained a bureau of information; and special agents appointed by the city authorities met the incoming trains at the railway stations, guided them to hotels that had been inspected and licensed to receive them, protected them against extortion, and gave them aid and advice in preparing for the voyage.<sup>57</sup> All these measures were quickly adopted by Hamburg, and some of them appeared in the passenger acts of Holland in 1837, of Belgium in 1843, and of France in 1855. In the United States the Passenger Act of 1819 received certain amendments in 1847 and 1848, but they were immaterial so far as European immigrants were concerned. The act of 1855 was much more complete, and embodied the sincere and intelligent opinions of men who had carefully studied the conditions of steerage transportation. Unfortunately it never was, and indeed could not be, enforced. "Official reports do not show that any prosecution resulted in recovery" of the penalties it imposed.<sup>58</sup> No action was ever maintained for violation of it. From the time of its passage there was "doubt as to the applicability of the penalties to the case of a vessel arriving from abroad,"<sup>59</sup> and subsequently it was held that the law never applied to steamships.<sup>60</sup> A great difficulty

<sup>56</sup> Maguire, *The Irish in America*, 180.

<sup>57</sup> Chandèze, *op. cit.*, 197; 43d Cong., Senate Exec. Doc., No. 23, 158.

<sup>58</sup> *Congress. Record*, XIII, 3,016.

<sup>59</sup> 43d Cong., Senate Exec. Doc., No. 23, 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Congress. Record*, XIII, 3,015.

in enforcing this law, as well as that of 1860 for the protection of female passengers, arose from the transitory nature of the testimony required to convict; for immigrants could not be detained without suffering hardship, so that witnesses were usually lacking at the final trial.<sup>61</sup>

All authorities agree, however, that in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century little was accomplished by legislation except at Bremen and Hamburg toward improving the conditions of transportation. And yet conditions did improve. A report to Congress in 1873 represents the sanitary arrangements and ventilation as still being defective; but cruelty and ill-usage were things of the past; women were no longer exposed to imposition; the water and food supplied were usually sufficient in quality and quantity; and hospital facilities were adequate for all ordinary cases.<sup>62</sup> The force that accomplished these beneficent results was not law but competition.<sup>63</sup> As immigration increased in volume, passenger transportation became a more important branch of the shipping business between Europe and America, and rivalry among the ship-owners grew keen. It was necessary for them to advertise abroad through publications and traveling agents not only the free institutions and bounties of nature in America, but also the special facilities they offered for crossing the ocean. Meantime it grew easier to detect misrepresentation. The postal service became better and cheaper on both sides of the Atlantic, and other means of communication were improved. In consequence the ill-usage or discomfort of passengers on certain ships became known to prospective emigrants, and the reputation and profits of the owners suffered. Enlightened self-interest, therefore, led the more intelligent among them to institute improvements, and others were forced to follow their example or see themselves driven out of business. The transition to steamship service cheapened and shortened the voyage, centralized and improved the organization and management of the business, and made it finally possible to legislate effectively against abuses.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 21.

<sup>62</sup> 43d Cong., Senate Exec. Doc., No. 23, 12, 196, 197.

<sup>63</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 561.

The trials of the immigrant were by no means ended when he reached shore, for wherever he landed he was liable to fall a prey to the spoiler. Without the aid of friends who knew the snares that were set for him and understood the arts and wiles of the "bunco" men that lay in wait, he was fortunate if the first few weeks of residence in the land of hope and freedom were passed without the loss of a great part of his possessions including his health and freedom. The most notorious robbers were found among the keepers of the New York immigrant boarding-houses. Some of these it is true were good men, exerting themselves to befriend the newcomers, and often finding employment for the needy through their acquaintances among the older residents and artisans in the city.<sup>64</sup> But the majority of them were rogues and swindlers. Their agents, commonly called "runners," met the incoming ships, and by ingratiatory manners, deception, and false promises, sometimes even by seizing the baggage as it was landed, beguiled or forced the immigrants to follow them to the resorts they represented. It is a significant fact that most of the boarding-house owners and nearly all the "runners" were themselves foreign born, and they plundered most successfully people of their own race. The hapless strangers, ignorant of the customs and laws of the new country, often unable to speak the language that would procure police assistance, more liable by reason of their "outlandish" dress and manners to meet with ridicule than sympathy from the masses of native citizens, were browbeaten and fleeced without mercy.<sup>65</sup> Almost as bad as the boarding-houses were the innumerable employment bureaus. These dens of iniquity undertook not only to find work for those seeking it, but to give information in regard to regions and localities however remote, to change money, dispose of negotiable paper, arrange land purchases, settle the duties at the custom house, forward baggage, packages, and letters, look after legal affairs, and procure at reduced rates transportation in any direction—all for a nominal (?) money consideration. "Five hundred railroad hands and three hundred ditchers wanted," a

<sup>64</sup> Bogen, *The Germans in America*, 55; *New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16th Annual Report*, 969 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 565 ff.

typical advertisement would read; and the luckless applicants for work, having paid the fee, were sent to some distant railroad or canal, where on arrival they found no labor needed. It was mainly at these establishments that the prototype of the present-day "white slave" trade was conducted. The Irish "intelligence offices" seem to have been the worst among them, but those conducted for the Germans were little better.<sup>66</sup>

It would be as difficult as it is unnecessary to enumerate all the devices for extortion and imposition that were worked upon the immigrants on their arrival. And they, for the most part peasants, artisans, and laborers of the villages and rural districts of the Old World, with untrained intelligence and scant experience in self-reliance, were ill fitted to defend themselves against the dangers that compassed them about. The abuses practiced against them in New York are most notorious, but in proportion to their numbers those landing in the other coast towns fared no better. Great numbers never penetrated farther into the country than the port of arrival; and for many of these financial ruin, shame, disease, and death were the portion. The Irish, the Swiss, and the Germans from Alsace-Lorraine, the Free County, Luxembourg, and the small South German states were the chief sufferers, for the reason that among these were found most of those that came over as individuals or in single families. The Scandinavians and North Germans found no little protection in their practice of getting together in bands before embarking or of migrating in whole villages, often accompanied by the village priest and doctor.<sup>67</sup>

To afford some aid and defense to their fellow-countrymen on their arrival the Germans in Philadelphia organized a benevolent society in 1778. It ceased to exist after a few years, but was renewed in 1810, and continued a useful life for many years. A similar society was formed in New York in 1804, which became the model for others in New York, Boston, Baltimore, New Orleans, and Galveston. The New York German society was partly endowed by Astor, and though it was much criticized on the ground that its members took little personal interest in the welfare of immigrants and relied too much on hired agents, yet there is

<sup>66</sup> Straten-Ponthoz, *op. cit.*, 135, 144.

<sup>67</sup> Büchele, *op. cit.*, 499, 559.

abundant testimony to its good influence and practical, useful activity.<sup>68</sup> The Irish society in New York was very weak until 1841, when it was reconstituted on the same plan as that of the Germans. The English, who were less exposed to imposition than other races, first formed an organization in 1844. These societies published annual reports and issued circulars of advice to be distributed among prospective emigrants, setting forth the qualifications essential to success in America, and urging the unfit to remain at home. They seldom gave money to needy immigrants, but they maintained employment agencies for common laborers, furnished credit to establish deserving artisans in their trade, cared as well as they could for unprotected women, procured legal advice for those who needed it, endeavored to relieve the congestion of the foreign quarters in the sea-ports by expediting the departure of immigrants to the interior, ministered according to their powers to the sick and distressed, and guarded as well as they could the interests of their fellow-countrymen in the municipal councils.<sup>69</sup>

But it was impossible for individuals and private benevolent societies to afford much protection to the increasing multitude of aliens. The government alone could cope with the abuses that had grown up, and the government made no attempt to do so before 1847. Until that time the care and support of the foreign born was left to the general quarantine and poor laws or to such local ordinances as New York City and other ports might choose to adopt. State legislation, so far as it related to immigrants, was intended to protect, not the newcomers but the native residents. Thus the law of 1824 authorized the mayor of New York City to require from all masters of vessels from abroad a bond to indemnify the city for expenses incurred for passengers landed there. The constitutionality of the act was questioned on the ground that immigration, being a branch of commerce, could be taxed or regulated only by the federal government and not by a state law; but the Supreme Court held that this was a police rather than a commercial measure.<sup>70</sup> The same could not be said, however, of the

<sup>68</sup> Straten-Ponthoz, 68 ff; *et al. plur.*

<sup>69</sup> *City of New York vs. Miln*, 11 Peters, U.S., 102

<sup>70</sup> *N.Y. Revised Statutes*, I, 445.



act of 1829 which ordered the health commissioner to collect from masters of vessels a dollar and fifty cents for each cabin passenger and a dollar for each steerage passenger, mate, sailor, or marine in order to provide for the Marine and Quarantine Hospital established on Staten Island.<sup>71</sup> Such a tax was without doubt unconstitutional, and after some years the New York legislature found it expedient to modify the law, and while retaining its substance return to the form of the act of 1824, which the Supreme Court had approved. In New York, after 1824, it was provided by the legislature that masters of vessels should report all passengers brought to land and should give bond for each one to indemnify every city, county, and town in the state against any expense for the relief or support of the person named in the bond for the term of four years; but from this bond the owner of the vessel might be released by paying within twenty-four hours of the landing of the passengers the sum of one dollar and a half per capita. The substance of this measure was enacted into law in most of the other states that received any immigrants, and remained in force until the Supreme Court pronounced it unconstitutional in 1876. From time to time and from place to place the cash payment for which the bond might be commuted varied between one dollar and two dollars and a half, and was of course shifted by the ship-owners onto the passengers by an addition to the charge for transportation. It cannot be said that any state regarded or intended it to be a source of revenue beyond the necessary expenses incurred in behalf of the immigrants themselves.

Meantime with the increasing volume of arrivals the system of exploitation by swindlers and bullies grew constantly worse; and the vast influx of helpless Irish in the years of the great famine forced New York state to act in their behalf. On May 5, 1847, the legislature created the State Board of Commissioners of Immigration. The act provided that the master of a vessel landing immigrants should report to the mayor of New York the name, birthplace, last legal residence, age, sex, and occupation of each one; whether any were lunatics, deaf, dumb, blind, infirm, or maimed; that the owner or consignee should give bond conditioned

<sup>71</sup> *N.Y. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16th Annual Report, 975.*

to indemnify the commissioners and each county, city, or town for any expense incurred for the relief or support of the person named in it for five years, and to refund any charges incurred by the commissioners for the support or medical care of immigrants if received into the Marine Hospital or any institution under their jurisdiction; such bond to be secured by two sureties in the sum of three hundred dollars each; and that the owner might commute for this bond by paying a fixed sum for each immigrant landed. The commissioners were empowered to board vessels, inspect the immigrants, and report to the mayor; to support such as became a public charge for whom commutation money had been paid; to assist them in finding employment; aid them in moving to any part of New York or to other states; and to manage the quarantine hospital. The creation of this board was epoch-making in the history of immigration. It was composed of able and public-spirited men who served without pay, and who devised the principles and methods of handling immigrants that were subsequently adopted and further developed by the federal government. For a few years they were viciously accused of all sorts of bad practices by those persons who had lived on the plunder of the alien arrivals, but in 1856 the New York grand jury after a thorough investigation pronounced the commission "a blessing not only to the immigrants but also to the community at large."<sup>72</sup> In 1855 Castle Garden was made a landing-station, and three years later the commission moved its quarters thither. Besides its administration, examining, and medical offices, it maintained information and employment bureaus. Immigrants were instructed with regard to the routes, fares, and necessary steps to be taken in reaching other parts of America, the demand for certain kinds of labor in sundry regions and the likelihood of finding employment; a post-office was established; a brokerage office was maintained for changing foreign money and cashing bills of exchange; boarding-houses were inspected and licensed; those suffering from contagious diseases were isolated and the other sick were cared for; and as far as possible in other ways the interests of the immigrants were guarded. The cost of the work was defrayed by the commutation money collected.

<sup>72</sup> *N.Y. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16th Annual Report, 975.*

For twenty-nine years this system of reception arrangements endured; but in 1876 the United States Supreme Court held that the money collected by New York in commutation of the bonds of ship-owners was equivalent to a head tax on immigrants, and as such was forbidden by the Constitution. Subsequently, the state of New York met the expenses of the board by an appropriation from the general revenue until 1882, when the federal government imposed a tax of fifty cents per capita on immigrants. The Secretary of the Treasury then contracted with the New York Commissioners that they should continue to receive and provide for immigrants as before, and that their expenses should be defrayed out of the fund created by the tax. This contract was revoked, however, in 1890 on the ground that a dual administration of immigration was not conducive to the improvement of the service, and United States officials then took complete charge of it; Castle Garden was abandoned, and the functions of the state commission ceased.

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